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SUBJECT: GET OUT THE VOTE EFFORTS TARGET PRO-PO YOUNG
ADULTS AND STUDENTS

¶1. (U) With youth vote possibly delivering the election to the opposition Civic Platform (PO), turnout of students in this weekend's parliamentary elections will be a crucial factor. Students are more energized this year than in previous rounds, particularly in 2005 when many opted to sit out. Blogs, SMS messages and MTV Polska have called on students to "get off their *** and vote." Many expect a higher turnout this time. Thus, there was considerable attention paid when over 16,000 students in 33 universities and 18 cities across Poland participated in a mock legislative election Tuesday. The mock ballot demonstrated PO's domination among students: the party received 60% of votes, whereas PiS trailed behind in second place with 13%. In some universities, such as the University of Warsaw, PO received 70% of votes. LiD and the Women's Party finished third and fourth with 11.8% and 4.1% respectively. 4.1% of participating students stated that they recognize the importance of voting but didn't believe any party was worth supporting.

¶2. (U) In public opinion polls, students and young adults say they feel largely disillusioned with the current government of Jaroslaw Kaczynski. They believe it has abused its power, attempted to control the public media, and violated personal rights. Even those who supported PiS in the 2005 elections and agree with the principles of lustration (vetting officials for past cooperation with Communist-era security services) and eliminating corruption consider that the government's methods for achieving these goals are unacceptable. In 2005, many young people had an indifferent attitude towards PO and PiS, seeing little difference between them. In 2007, however, students are more mobilized and say they are determined to influence political life.

¶3. (U) There are two groups of youth who say they intend to vote for PO. The first are attracted to PO's forward-thinking agenda which focuses on providing opportunities for Poland's youth and promoting entrepreneurship. To these young Poles, PiS seems stuck in the past, focusing on eradicating remnants of the communist period that most of them never experienced or only vaguely remember. The second group tends to have more liberal beliefs than those of PO but feel that it is the only party with the potential to oust PiS and that their votes for other parties, such as LiD, would be wasted.

¶4. (U) Efforts have been made to increase the youth voter turnout, including campaigns via text messages, the internet, and in the media. Students tend to study in areas other than where they are registered to vote, so the University of Warsaw has authorized absence from class until 1pm on the Monday following Election Day to allow students to return to their home cities to cast their ballot. The press has also published guides instructing voters on how to temporarily re-register in new cities. Although stated youth support for PO is substantial, young people have proven less reliable when it comes to actually getting to the polls and voting.

An informal SMS campaign jokingly urges young people to "Steal your grandmother's ID card" to prevent her from voting (presumably for PiS) on Sunday; but if they are to have an impact they also need to get to the polls themselves.

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